

Zeffirelli tackles Shakespeare once again *Otello* goes to the opera

By KEN KEOBKE

Remember *Romeo and Juliet*? Not the play, the movie, by Franco Zeffirelli. For high school students, the scene in Juliet's bedroom was the first chance to see real nudity and simulated sex. Shakespeare became interesting.

Well, Zeffirelli has done it again, this time using Shakespeare's *Othello*. Sort of. Actually the 'h' in Othello is missing because this movie is based on Verdi's operatic version of Othello. This means that there is lots of singing and, if you don't understand Italian, you will be reading subtitles such as "death" which is what happens to everyone in the end, and "nothing is worse than suspicion" which is true.

Unfounded suspicion arouses jealousy which proves fatal for all. Over a personal grudge, Iago torments Othello, the Lion of Venice, with doubts about Desdemona's fidelity. Watch for trouble in the form of a handkerchief.

We were given early notice of this production in the form of a postcard from Crete, where the film was shot last year. One of my old girlfriends, Rebecca Ross, happened to be in Crete during the filming of *Otello*. She quickly found out that being an extra in a film pays a lot better than picking olives in a field.

Rebecca claimed that she plays a push-up bra, but later modified this into "a noblewoman." I was told she had several scenes in the film but I only saw her twice. This is because Placido Domingo kept hogging the camera.

As much as I still love Rebecca this is okay with me. Placido has a wonderful voice and in the theatre you sit circled by 12 speakers that show it off. More importantly, Placido Domingo can act. You believe that he is a mighty warrior, that he is black, and that his passion can move him to murder. Justino Diaz is a frighteningly snakelike Iago, and



OOH, I LIKE YOUR LAPELS: Otello (left, played by Placido Domingo) roughs up Iago (Justino Diaz) in Franco Zeffirelli's *Otello*.

Katia Ricciarelli is a strong and beautiful Desdemona.

You should go see *Otello*, even if you've never read the Coles Notes. (Or if you have.) You should go see *Otello* if you are afraid of opera. You

should see it if you ever wondered what Shakespeare might have done if he could have made music videos. Go. Get cultured. And keep your eyes open for a really pretty noblewoman (one of dozens).



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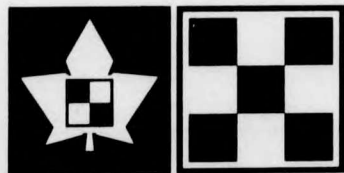
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